Introduction

Researchers in applied linguistics usually collate language data in the form of written texts, conversations, or research interviews to address different research questions. Written texts might include academic papers, articles in the media, or student compositions. In analysing written texts, researchers have developed methods and frameworks to analyse linguistic features, writing practices, or the relationship between text and context in which the texts occur. While approaches to written text analysis have been developed from different academic traditions, several approaches might have deeply influenced the current developments of text analysis in applied linguistics. These include systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (e.g. Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2003), the Birmingham School of text analysis (e.g. Coulthard, 1994; Hoey, 1983, 2000; Sinclair & Carter, 2004), text analysis in rhetorical genre studies (RGS) (e.g. Bazerman & Prior, 2004; Devitt, 2004; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Schryer, 2011), and computer-aided corpus-based approaches to text analysis (e.g. Baker & McEnery, 2015; Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Popping, 2000), as well as the latest developments of computational text analysis (e.g. Mugan, 2017). With shared goals of analysing texts from different perspectives, these approaches might overlap or complement each other in one way or another.

This chapter provides an overview of approaches to written text analysis. While fully mindful of the fact that a text is inherently imbedded in the social and cultural contexts in which it is produced and consumed, this chapter purposely distinguishes text analysis from discourse analysis, which is addressed in a separate chapter (see Chun, in this volume). While discourse analysis is concerned with the social construction of reality through language use, this chapter on text analysis looks at a range of approaches to analysing textual and textual practice features that can be traced in text per se, rather than addressing questions such as how ideology or identity has been represented in text, which are among the key objectives of sociocultural-focused discourse analysis. In other words, this chapter focuses on ways of analysing concrete texts as the objects of study rather than looking at how social structures have been formed with texts.

While there is no unified definition of what constitutes a text, linguists generally agree that text is “a naturally occurring manifestation of language, i.e. as a communicative language
event in a context” (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 63). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976, pp. 1–2), text is

[a term] used in linguistics to refer to any passage – spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole. . . . A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a sentence; and it is not defined by its size. . . . A text is best regarded as a semantic unit; a unit not of form but of meaning.

Linguists might differ in their definitions of what makes a text, and these differences are much due to their diverse perspectives and approaches to text analysis.

In analysing text, we can examine particular lexico-grammatical features, themes, cohesion and coherence, or various structures of text (e.g. generic, schematic, rhetorical, or move structures), etc. We can collect a number of texts on a single theme, or from a single genre, a time period, or an author, analyse them together as a corpus, and aggregate the features as representatives of other texts. In this process, we can also uncover the contexts in which text occurs, at least partially by analysing the texts, and describe how texts rely on other texts (i.e. intertextuality), which are among many aspects that text analysis can reveal.

This chapter will proceed from introductions of some of the most influential language theories in text analysis to computer-aided approaches to text analysis, and end with a sample study that examines Chinese ESL students’ intertextual practices in academic writing by drawing on a combination of SFL and RGS text analytical methods (Wang, 2016).

Systemic functional linguistic approach

The field of SFL was originated by Michael Halliday (1985) based on a foundation laid by his PhD supervisor, J.R. Firth, and further extended by Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiesen (2004), among many others. SFL has made great contributions to text analysis in a range of aspects. SFL considers language as a social semiotic system that can be analysed through various descriptive and interpretive frameworks. As argued by Halliday (1994, p. xv): “the aim [of SFL] has been to construct a grammar for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written, in modern English.” While SFL develops a theory about language as social process, it also develops an analytical methodology which permits systematic and thorough description of language patterns.

Texts in context

To start with, SFL postulates that a text always occurs in two contexts, one within the other. One is the context of culture and the other is context of situation. Context of culture relates to the broad sociocultural environment in which language is used. It is concerned about how ideology, social conventions, and institutions have shaped the text. It has also been related to the notion of social purpose. According to SFL, people who use language for similar purposes develop, over time, common types of spoken and written texts or genres which achieve their common goals. People who share an understanding of how the common purposes of a culture are achieved with language will therefore be able to predict, to a large extent, the structure and language of the texts they encounter. For example, when a university student is required to write an essay, how to write the essay and what to be included in the essay are very much constrained by the norms and conventions in the sociocultural environment (i.e. the context of culture) in which
the student is located. The context of culture in this case would be closely related to the cultural and academic norms prevalent in the country in which the student is studying.

**Context of situation** refers to the specific situations within the broader sociocultural environment. Three variables of this situation have been identified within the functional model as having an influence on the shape and meaning of texts. These variables can be summarised as follows.

- **Field**: what is going on in a text
- **Tenor**: the social relationship between those taking part
- **Mode**: how language is used in a text

The configuration of meanings which come about because of the situation can be called **register**, which is also the collective name of the Field, Tenor and Mode.

Following up on the example of essay writing by a university student, the material situational setting in this case would be the specific university at which the student is studying. The context of situation in this case refers to an abstraction made up of the sum of motivating features of the text’s construction which makes the student’s essay as it is, what Hasan (1996) calls the ‘motivational relevancies’. To analyse the context of situation, we can examine the three variables of the register in the student’s essay.

**Functions of language**

SFL proposes that the three variables of context of situation affect our language choices because they reflect three main functions of language. Halliday (1994) refers to three metafunctions or meanings of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Language performs these three metafunctions simultaneously in a text.

**Ideational meanings** are concerned with how authors represent the world. In other words, they concern what is happening in the text and are most influenced by the Field of the text. In the SFL account (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), ideational meanings involve two components: that of **experiential meaning** in the clause, and that of **logical meaning** between clauses in clause complexes. Experiential meaning, which expresses ‘meaning of the world’, is realised in wordings through the system of **transitivity** which examines the participant roles, process types, and circumstances in clauses. More details about experiential meaning can be found in Butt (2012, Chapter 3), Eggins (2004, Chapter 8) and Thompson (2013, Chapter 5). Logical meaning concerns the logical structure of the clause complex. There are two systems of **logical relations**: that of taxis and logico-semantics. The tactic system describes the type of interdependency relationship between clauses linked to a clause complex, while the logico-semantic system describes the specific type of meaning relationship between linked clauses. More details about logical meaning can be found in Butt (2012, Chapter 7), Eggins (2004, Chapter 9) and Thompson (2013, Chapter 7). In addition, an example of analysing logico-semantic relationship between clause complexes in Chinese and English can be found in Wang (2004).

**Interpersonal meanings** are concerned with how authors interact with language and/or how authors express a point of view in a text. Interpersonal meanings concern the social relationship between all the participants in and around a text, and are mostly influenced by the Tenor of the text. Interpersonal meanings cover two main areas: one concerns the type of interaction taking place and the kind of commodity being exchanged, and the other concerns the way authors take a position in their texts. To analyse interpersonal meanings, SFL scholars examine
the mood structure of clauses and look at the role of modality (modalization and modulation) in interaction. The detailed analytical frameworks for the analysis of interpersonal meanings can be found in Eggins (2004, Chapter 6), Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, Chapter 3) and Thompson (2013, Chapter 4). In recent years, James Martin and his colleagues (e.g. Martin, 2000; Martin & Macken-Horarik, 2003; Martin & White, 2005) developed frameworks to analyse the appraisal system, which is part of interpersonal meanings in text. This has also been used as an analytical framework in text analysis (see e.g. McKinley, 2018).

Textual meanings are concerned with how authors organise a text. They concern how the author organises the experiential and interpersonal meanings into a coherence whole, and they are closely linked to the Mode of the text. To analyse the textual meanings, SFL scholars examine the Theme/Rheme structure of the clause and look at thematic organisations that contribute to the cohesive development of a text. In addition, SFL scholars examine cohesive devices, which are lexical and grammatical ties weaving all meanings together in the text. Cohesive devices include the lexical devices of repetition, semantic relations, equivalence and semblance, the grammatical devices of reference, substitution, and ellipsis. Detailed illustrations of textual meanings analysis can be found in Eggins (2004, Chapter 10) and Thompson (2013, Chapters 6 and 8).

Genres and structures

A group of SFL scholars and language educators such as James Martin and David Rose (Martin, 1984, 1997; Martin & Rose, 2008) developed the “Sydney School” of genre analysis, and they have examined a range of different texts and applied these analyses in various educational settings. Martin (1984, p. 25) describes genre as “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture”. This view draws on Halliday’s work and that of the anthropologist Malinowski, and, in particular, the view that “contexts both of situation and of culture [are] important if we are to fully interpret the meaning of a text” (Martin, 1984, p. 25). Examples of genres examined in this perspective include service encounters, research reports, academic essays, casual conversations, and micro-genres (Martin, 1997; Martin & Rose, 2008) such as descriptions, reports, recounts, procedures, and expositions, described in terms of their schematic structures and genre-specific language features. In the SFL account, texts sharing the same general purpose in the culture belong to the same genre. Texts in the same genre tend to have comparable obligatory and optional structural patterns. The emergence of a similar structural pattern makes it possible for people to acquire knowledge about how people use language to achieve different goals. These insights have great implications for educational purposes and academic research.

The Birmingham school of text analysis

The term ‘Birmingham school of text analysis’ is loosely used here to refer to a range of approaches to text analysis developed by a group of UK-based linguists (Coulthard, 1994; Hoey, 1983, 2000; Hunston & Thompson, 2000; and Sinclair and Carter, 2004) working at the University of Birmingham or the University of Liverpool, UK, or ‘honorary’ staff there such as Michael Halliday. This school of thought is closely associated with SFL, but it has also made distinctive contributions to exploring structures of text, detecting evaluative patterns of text, and developing corpus studies of texts, as summarised next.

A significant contribution made by this group of scholars is the exploration of various structural patterns of texts. Among them, Hoey has researched on the common patterns of texts (e.g. general-specific and problem-solution structures) (Hoey, 1983) and signalling in
discourse (Hoey 1979, 1991). Sinclair (1986) explores the relationship between fact and aver-
ral. This group of scholars finds that English texts are often organised as general to particular,
as what have also been found in lexical analysis, superordinate to hyponym. For instance, liv-
ing things include plants and animals; plants include trees and flowers; animals include fish,
lion and many more. The second commonly used English text structure is Problem-Solution,
typically with a four-part structure (i.e. situation-problem-solution-evaluation). In explora-
tions of text structures, Coulthard (1994); Hoey, Scott, and Thompson (2001) and Hoey (2007)
have provided collections of papers in demonstrating the developments from this perspective.

Another contribution of this group is on evaluation patterns of texts, such as Hunston and
Thompson’s work (e.g. Hunston, 2000, 2008, 2011; Millar & Hunston, 2015; Thompson &
Alba-Juez, 2014; Hunston & Thompson, 2000). Hunston and Thompson’s edited volume
*Evaluation in Text* (2000) is the first significant contribution that this group of scholars has
made to the analysis of evaluation in discourse, and it was followed by many others including
the work of Thompson and Laura Alba-Juez (2014). This group of scholars took the analysis
of ‘evaluation’ as an emerging field of study that covers a range of lexical, grammatical, and
textual approaches to the analysis of expression of opinion and stance in English. To Hunston
and Thompson (2000, p. 5), evaluation is “a broad cover term for the speaker’s or writer’s
attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he
or she is talking about.” Their research in evaluation includes corpus-based studies of lexical
and grammatical items carrying an evaluative load, stance in persuasive rhetoric, evaluation
in narrative, evaluative disjuncts and text structuring, multilayered evaluation analysis, and
much more. Martin and his colleagues from SFL who worked on on *Appraisal* (e.g. Martin,
2000; Martin & White, 2005) have also contributed significantly to developments in evalua-
tion research.

In addition, this group of scholars – especially Sinclair (1991; Sinclair & Carter, 2004),
Hoey (2007), and Hunston (2002, 2011) – has contributed significantly to the corpus
approaches to text analysis (also please refer to the section of Corpus linguistics in this chap-
ter). As a Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Birmingham, Sinclair
was a first-generation modern corpus linguist and the founder of the famous COBUILD pro-
ject, which created and analysed the first major electronic corpus of contemporary English
texts, the Collins Corpus, later leading to the development of the Bank of English. Based on
these corpora, the Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary and many other dictionar-
ies and grammar books have been published. Also based in Birmingham, Sinclair’s followers
Hoey and Hunston are similarly keen advocates of corpus linguistics. More recently, Hunston
and Francis (2000) developed the Pattern Grammar model of linguistic analysis, which is a
way of describing the syntactic environments of individual words, based on studying their
occurrences in language corpora.

**Rhetorical genre studies**

Rhetoric genre studies (RGS) are grounded in North American composition research. RGS
scholars hold that genre emerges from repeated social action in recurring situations which give
rise to regularities in form and content (e.g. Bazerman, 1997; Devitt, 2004; Miller, 1984/1994).
This school of scholarship has been influenced in particular by a paper written by the speech
communication specialist Miller, (1984) titled ‘Genre as social action’. In this paper, Miller
argues for genre as rhetorical action based on recurrent situations and for an open principle
of genre classification based on rhetorical practice, rather than a closed one based solely on
structure, substance, or aim. Without abandoning earlier conceptions of genre as ‘types’ or
‘kinds’ of discourse characterized by similarities in content and form, RGS scholars focus on “tying these linguistic and substantive similarities to regularities in human spheres of activities” (Freedman & Medway, 1994, p. 1). In other words, this view of genre has been used to relate regularities in discourse types with a broader social and cultural understanding of language in use.

While many researchers in RGS have adopted ethnographic rather than linguistic methods for providing detailed descriptions of the contexts surrounding genres and the actions they perform within these contexts, they have also contributed to the text analysis in genre studies. The most prominent contribution in this regard is demonstrated in Bazerman and Prior (2004). This edited volume aims to go beyond typical textual analysis by considering questions of “what texts do and how texts mean rather than what they mean” (Bazerman & Prior, 2004, p. 3). In other words, this group of scholars tends to explore many aspects of *textual practices* through detailed text analysis. The topics covered in the book range from analysing “what texts talk about; how texts tell stories; how the language in texts works; how texts rely on other texts (i.e. intertextuality); how multiple codes are combined in a text”, to analysis of “how texts come into being; how talk and text interact in situated practices; how texts organise activity and people, etc.” (Bazerman & Prior, 2004, pp. v–vi). With clear illustrations of a range of methods in text and textual practice analysis, this book provides a valuable and practical resource for novice researchers who want to apply approaches to text analysis in applied linguistic research.

**Corpus linguistics and computational text analysis**

While the approaches discussed in the previous section are essentially theories of language, corpus linguistics and the recently emerging computational text analysis (CTA) are fundamentally ways of investigating language. While both the language theories and methods for investigating language are concerned with naturally occurring language as text, they are complementary and often productively synergic in addressing different research questions in applied linguistics.

**Corpus linguistics**

Corpus linguistics (see both Coxhead and Martinez in this volume) examines features of language through collections of large sets of authentic or ‘real word’ texts (i.e. corpora) with the help of a computer. This method of language analysis has been used in a number of fields including language acquisition, syntax, semantics, and comparative linguistics, among others. The wide availability of computers and computer-aided language processing programs has greatly enhanced the development of corpus linguistics in the last two decades. It is now a widely used methodology for doing text analysis and offers unique insights into the use of language. With the use of computers, researchers can explore patterns of language use (grammatical or lexical for instance) within texts. This use of modern technologies has greatly facilitated language-related research and dramatically reduced the time and resources needed to find particular linguistic patterns and collocations of words in texts. Among many others, scholars like Baker & McEnery (2015), Biber et al. (1998) and Popping (2000) have made significant contributions to the corpus approaches to text analysis.

While corpus linguistics is taken as a branch of linguistics that uses corpora of language data, or large databases of real-world (as opposed to experimentally elicited) language use to analyse language features, computational text analysis is a broad term that refers to a range of statistical and computational methods that analyse text as data to address real-world issues.
CTA

CTA is a newly emerging field that deals with the rapid increase of text data collected and stored in social science research. As the latest form of quantitative text analysis that has a long history in social science research, CTA also involves a process of reducing text to quantitative information and analysing this information by using quantitative methods. Along with the development of computer programming languages such as R and Python (see Larson-Hall & Mizumoto, this volume), this rapidly growing field of text analysis has introduced a set of innovative research methods for extracting valuable knowledge from texts. These computer-aided methods usually involve the process of structuring the input text (converting unstructured text-rich data into structured data), deriving patterns within the structured data using statistical and machine learning algorithms, and finally evaluating and interpreting the results. Typical text analytics applications include the finding and extracting of relevant information from the text, text categorisation, document classification, text clustering, personality analysis, concept extraction, and many more.

R and Python are the programming languages for data analysts to manipulate, visualise, and execute complex data analyses on text data. There are a few widely used Python or R-based tools that are powerful resources for natural language processing (NLP). These include Natural Language Tool Kit (NLTK), Textblob, Stanford CoreNLP, and more. NLTK is an open source library that includes extensive software, data, and documentation, all freely downloadable from http://nltk.org. In addition, enormous resources have been made available for NLP with Python in recent years (e.g. Mugan, 2017; O’Reilly, 2017).

Sample study

This sample study investigates intertextual practices in academic writing by Chinese ESL students (Wang, 2016) by means of detailed textual analysis of the students’ writing. Along with the increase in international graduate students, the dynamics of higher education in English speaking countries have changed dramatically and are coupled with an obvious gap between native English speaking (NES) and English as second language (ESL) graduate students in terms of their academic writing skills. In line with the latest development in academic writing research, this study examines Chinese ESL graduate students’ intertextual practices in composing their academic writing by combining detailed textual analysis and retrospective interview. Intertextual practice in this study is concerned with not only transgressive intertextual practices or plagiarism behaviours, but also how Chinese ESL students draw on external sources in developing their own writing.

Following the approaches to intertextuality analysis in the work of Bazerman (2004), Devitt (1991), and Martin and White (2005), this study mainly focuses on the linguistic conventions of intertextual practices. According to Bazerman (2004), there are many reasons for doing an intertextual analysis: for instance, to identify which realm of sources a writer relies on and how they do this as well as to understand how a writer attempts to characterise, rely on, and advance prior work in their related fields of study. In addition, Devitt (1991) and Bazerman (2004) take intertextual relations not only as social practice, but more or less as stable conventions of a particular discourse community. Bazerman (2004, p. 94) states that “intertextuality is not just a matter of which other texts you refer to, but how you use them, what you use them for, and ultimately how you position yourself as a writer to them to make your own statement”. These theories and beliefs provided the writer of this sample study with great insights in establishing a framework to analyse the intertextual practices in academic writing of Chinese ESL graduate students.
Furthermore, Martin and White’s (2005) framework in appraisal theory for analysing engagement is especially relevant to the sample study. Engagement “is concerned with the sourcing of attitude and acknowledgement of alternative voices” (Martin, 2002, p. 58) in a text. In other words, it is concerned with identifying linguistic resources that are useful for including external sources and looking closely at the choices available for evaluating these sources. In this sample study, Martin and White’s (2005) framework for analysing external sources is drawn on and incorporated with Bazerman’s framework on intertextuality to analyse the data collected. This study explores four dimensions of intertextuality to understand how writers draw on external sources to write their own texts: 1) intertextual representation, examining how writers include external sources in a text; 2) source type, exploring what type of sources writers use; 3) source function, investigating what writers use external sources for; and 4) endorsement, considering how the writers position themselves as writers in relation to external sources. Thus, the analytical framework detailed in Table 37.1 was established to examine how writers draw on external sources in writing their own texts.

This analytical framework was applied to detailed textual analysis of the sampled texts written by the Chinese ESL students. The four key intertextual representations were identified with reference to the following definitions.

1. Direct quotation is usually identified by quotation marks, block indentation, italics, or other typographic setting apart from the other words of the text.
2. Indirect quotation usually specifies a source and then attempts to reproduce the meaning of the original but in words that reflect the author’s understanding, interpretation, or spin on the original. Indirect quotation filters the meaning through the second author’s words and attitude and allows the meanings to be more thoroughly infused with the second writer’s purpose (Bazerman, 2004).

### Table 37.1 An analytical framework for intertextual practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intertextual representation (how writers include external sources in a text)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Direct quotation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Source type (what types of sources writers use)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Personal or impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Identified or unidentified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Specific or generic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Singular or plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Status neutral or high/low status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unattributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Mentioning of a person, document, or statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Comment or evaluation on a statement, text, or otherwise invoked voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Implicitly recognisable language and forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Source function (what writers use external sources for)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Background information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Beliefs, ideas, issues circulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Endorsement (how the writers position themselves as writers in relation to external sources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Non-endorsement (neutral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Endorsement (positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Dis-endorsement (negative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary specifies a brief statement or account of the main points of something that has been said in the original. It is usually based on a single source and involves far less text re-use of the original than indirect quotations. It is often referred to as paraphrasing (Hyland, 2000).

Synthesis is the combination of external sources or elements to form a connected whole. It is usually derived from multiple sources. It involves complex rewording, restructuring, and reinterpretation of the original with a view to forming a coherent whole in writing (Hyland, 1999).

This study was carried out at a major university in Australia, where ten master-level students newly from China were recruited as participants for the project. This group of students were in the same age group (25 to 30) and shared similar linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, as well as similar experiences in terms of length of residency in Australia, ESL proficiency, L1 and L2 writing expertise, and the stage of their academic studies. The primary data consist of the background questionnaires, 40 pieces of students’ self-nominated assignments with teachers’ grading and comments, follow-up interviews, and the relevant university documents. The participants were encouraged to submit their own “best” assignments that involved heavy use of external sources in their writing. Detailed textual analysis based on the four-dimensional framework in Table 39.1 was carried out on these 40 assignments, which had an average of 2,000–2,500 words each. The types of assignments include literature review, discourse analysis project, case study, and curriculum design. In the textual analysis, every intertextual instance identified in the assignments was analysed in terms of the four dimensions of intertextual representation, source type, source function, and endorsement. Then, the total occurrences of each dimension were explained and discussed, with detailed examples.

The detailed textual analysis together with retrospective interviews (see Rolland, Dewaele, & Costa, this volume) in this study find that the participants demonstrated some common intertextual practices in their writing as well as individual differences. The tendency to use of indirect quotes rather than summaries and syntheses in their own words is identified as the most salient feature in all the writing of the participants. That is, the student writers appropriated source materials in their own texts without much lexical or syntactic alteration. This could be widely observed in the participants’ practices of “indirect quoting”. The participants have used synthesis sparingly as a source representation skill, and rarely used the synthesized material in support of their opinion making.

This study suggests it might not be sufficient for ESL students to fulfil the requirements of academic writing by adopting a surface processing approach to external sources. Being short of appropriate intertextual strategies, the students often find it difficult to adapt to the conventions of critical thinking and argumentation in English language universities. On arrival at a new academic context in an English language university, the first academic challenges that Chinese ESL students encounter might be why and how to be analytical and critical in their academic writing. Among many other possible factors, their original sociocultural perceptions of academic study and their lack of academic literacy required in international settings might have hindered ESL students’ academic success. These two issues need to be carefully considered and properly addressed by both the academics concerned and students themselves.

To conclude, the detailed text analysis adopted in this study to examine the Chinese ESL students’ employment of external sources, to some extent, demystifies these students’ academic writing practices for both the ESL students and teachers. It also shows that text analysis as a commonly used method in applied linguistic research can make great contributions to the identification of traditional textual features, such as lexico-grammatical characteristics of
texts, as well as the analysis of discursive processes that encompass the cognitive and intentional states that transcend the language use, such as evaluation in discourse and intertextual practices.

References


463